

# Getting your fill of water

Staying healthy means staying hydrated, all year long

STORIES BY ELLEN JAN KLEINERMAN | Plain Dealer Reporter

There are plenty of reasons to drink water — year-round. ¶ This time of year, we're still dealing with wind, cold, low humidity and exposure to dry furnace heat, which means the possibility of chapped lips, flaky skin, dry cough, nosebleeds, mild headaches and, oh yes, acne. All these could be outward signs that your body needs more fluid. ¶ MetroHealth Medical Center nutritionist Vicki Laganke says people often don't recognize the early signs of mild dehydration. "Thirst is a good indicator, but a late indicator." ¶ Health experts say good hydration is essential because the body is mostly water — about 70 percent overall. ¶ Our bodies use water for basic functions — breathing, sweating and urination. We need fluids to regulate overall body temperature, for chemical reactions and nutrition absorption, and more. Water is a lubricant, the basis for saliva and the fluid around joints, mucus membranes, eyes and the spinal cord. It alleviates everyday discomforts, such as constipation. And water helps flush out toxins during the digestive process — key to preventing acne. ¶ "If you start to feel kind of yucky in the afternoon, drink water," Laganke says. A mere 2 percent drop in the body's water volume can set off dizziness, muscle cramps, fatigue and problems focusing on your computer, according to government studies. | SEE WATER ON E6

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## WATER

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Researchers haven't really nailed down exactly how much water people should drink daily. Laganke says it depends on a person's size and activities. Though no one is sure of the origin of the eight-glasses-a-day dictum, she says: "It's a good place to start."

Add a glass or two if you exercise, nurse a baby, shovel snow, work in the yard or increase activities in other ways.

Some of the newer government guidelines advise people to drink half their body weight daily — but in ounces instead of pounds. So, if you weight 140 pounds, you should ideally consume 70 ounces (about 9 cups) of water a day to start. Then add more for other activities.

The Institute of Medicine recommends that men drink about 13 cups and women 9 cups daily. Pregnant women should drink 10 cups, and nursing mothers at

least 13 cups daily.

Food provides about one-quarter of a person's daily hydration needs. (Tomatoes, for example, are about 90 percent water, some meats 50 percent, and Swiss cheese 35 percent.)

And, yes, coffee and pop all count toward fluid intake — but not fully. Caffeine (a diuretic), sugar and salt all reduce the hydration effects of these beverages. Beer, wine and alcohol all tend to dry you out, so drink these with water.

Laganke suggests making water consumption more enjoyable by drinking herbal tea or adding a squeeze of fresh lemon or a sprig of mint to a glass of water.

The Institute of Medicine says sports drinks with added salt, sugar and electrolytes are good during and after long, intense periods of exercise.


But on a routine day, Laganke says, "Water should be the main source of fluid in your diet."

"We evolved drinking water, not juice or flavored drinks."

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: [ekleiner@plaind.com](mailto:ekleiner@plaind.com), 216-999-4631



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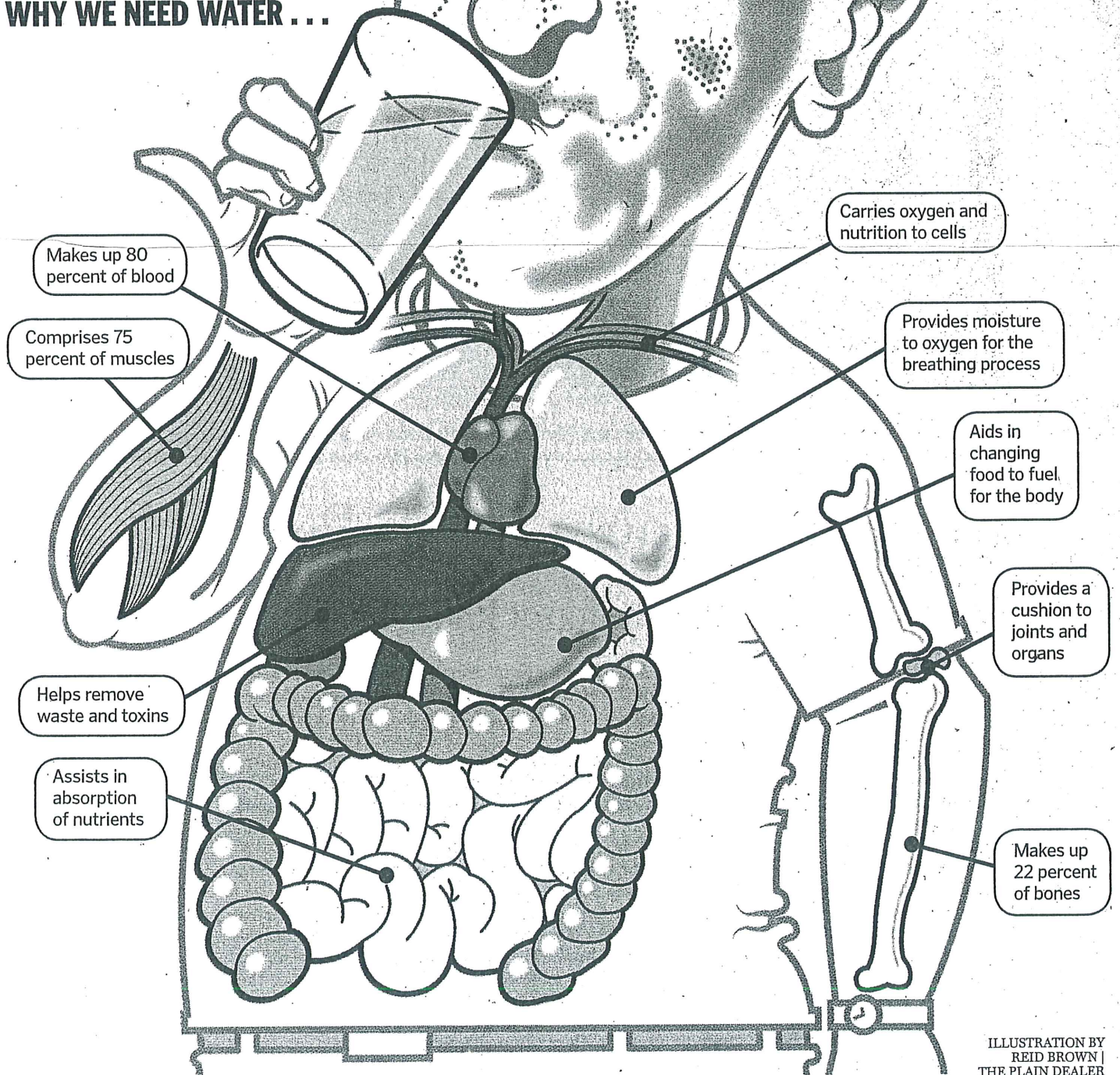


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